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ABSTRACT

The role of social interaction in the literacy learning of 21 children 3 and 4 years of age was investigated over a period of 8 months. Data were collected at a preschool classroom writing center, using the ethnographic techniques of participant observation, field notes, collection of written texts, as well as audio and video tapes. Patterns in the data indicated that author/audience conversation occurring as children completed self-selected literacy activities encouraged them to (1) activate, confirm/disconfirm, and revise their existing hypotheses about literacy; (2) form new literacy knowledge; (3) become audiences for their own texts; (4) internalize the audience's perspective and use this information to plan texts for absent audiences; (5) experience literacy activities beyond their independent abilities; and (6) with their teachers, build shared understandings about literacy. Overall, the findings indicated that children's self-selected literacy activities are rich contexts for literacy learning, and that social interaction, as part of these events, provides the predictable context and motivation for literacy learning, as well as influencing the kinds of literacy strategies children internalize and use independently. Appendices provide lists of transcription conventions and speech styles used in literacy events. (Author/RH)

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THE IMPACT OF AUTHOR/AUDIENCE INTERACTION ON PRESCHOOLERS' LITERACY LEARNING

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of social interaction in the literacy learning of 21 3- and 4-year-olds. Over a period of eight months, data were collected at a classroom writing center using the ethnographic techniques of participant observation, field notes, collection of written texts, audio and video tape. Patterns in the data indicated that author/audience conversation occurring as children completed self-selected literacy activities encouraged them to a) activate, confirm/disconfirm, and revise their existing hypotheses about literacy, b) form new literacy knowledge, c) become audiences for their own texts, d) internalize the audience's perspective and use this information to plan texts for absent audiences, e) experience literacy activities beyond their independent abilities, and f) with their teachers, build shared understandings about literacy. Overall, the findings indicate that children's self-selected literacy activities are rich contexts for literacy learning, and that social interaction, as part of these events, provides the predictable context and motivation for literacy learning, as well as influencing the kinds of literacy strategies children internalize and use independently.

THE IMPACT OF AUTHOR/AUDIENCE INTERACTION ON PRESCHOOLERS' LITERACY LEARNING

As investigation of the literacy learning of infants and preschoolers has intensified over the last decade, many researchers (Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1986; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Parker, 1983) have suggested that the process of written language learning parallels the oral language learning process. As in oral language learning (Halliday, 1975; Brown, 1977; Bruner, 1983; Snow & Goldfield, 1982; Wells, 1986), social interaction is seen as playing a major role in early literacy learning. Teale (1986), for example, has suggested that young children construct their own knowledge about literacy through social interaction with their parents and other literate persons in activities involving reading and writing, observation of the reading and writing behavior of others, and independent exploration of written language. If interaction with other persons plays a central role in supporting young children's literacy learning, then identification of the nature of this interaction and description of its impact on children's learning become research goals with both theoretical and educational significance.

There have been a number of studies (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Panofsky, 1986; Snow, 1983; Snow, Nathan, & Perlmann, 1985; Snow & Ninio, 1986) investigating the nature of parent/infant and parent/preschooler interactions during storybook reading. Though these studies were undertaken for different purposes, a consistent finding is that these events are accomplished through interactive routines, in which parents and children track the way the other plays his/her role in these events, and then both adjust their interactions to move toward the shared communicative goal. Both parents and children affect the goals and course of interaction (Author, 1986; Cazden, 1983; Teale, 1986). Together these studies have led researchers to conclude that book-focused interactions between parents and children provide an important entree into the world of literacy (Snow & Ninio, 1986; Taylor,1983; Taylor & Strickland, 1986; Teale, 1986).

Parent-child book reading is only one of the many social contexts in which children interact with others about literacy. In today's society, an increasing number of young children are learning about literacy in the social world of preschool and daycare settings ("Census Bureau," 1987). In group situations of this type, children are learning about literacy through interaction with peers as well as

adults. Though curricular support for literacy learning varies across settings, in some classrooms preschoolers have opportunities to learn about literacy through writing and reading their own texts , as well as through informal and formal opportunities to read trade books with adults and peers(Clyde, 1987; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Mills, 1986). In such settings, it appears that children have opportunities to participate in at least two major types of literacy events; that is, they have opportunities to work with more experienced peers or adults to achieve a shared literacy goal (e.g., understanding a storybook, co-authoring a written text), as well as to initiate literacy activities where they maintain primary control of the focus and progress of the event (e.g., writing and reading their own texts). In order to further our understanding of literacy learning in the early childhood years, there is a need for research which describes children's actions and interactions in both *co-authored* and *self-selected* literacy events across a variety of naturally occurring situations.

One of the purposes of this research is to describe the nature and role of social interaction in the self-selected literacy activities of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in a daycare program providing a variety of formal and informal opportunities for reading and writing. This paper describes the social interaction which occurred as children learned about writing by authoring their own texts, and as they learned about reading by rereading their own texts and acting as audiences for the texts of their peers and teachers. Though the focus of this paper is on young children's writing, much of the data includes both art and writing because children learned about these communication systems simultaneously and combined them frequently in their texts.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this research was a daycare program which served the 3- and 4-year-old children of faculty and staff at a large mid-western university. Of the 21 children who participated in the research, 15 were the children of faculty or graduate students and 6 had parents employed in staff positions at the University. At the beginning of the study, 13 of the children were 3-year-olds and 8 were 4-year-olds.

This classroom was chosen specifically because the director and teachers had developed a curriculum aimed at supporting young children's literacy learning. A major aim of this program was to provide functional reasons for children to use literacy and a variety of audiences for their work. Each day

during two self-selected activity periods, children were allowed to choose how, when, and why they would participate in literacy activities. At these times, choices included working at the writing table, the art table, the book area, the piano, or at other centers such as the block area or housekeeping corner. Typical of print-related activities during these periods were writing notes to parents and classmates, writing books to be shared with the class, creating sign-up sheets and signs, writing reminder notes, writing stories for the class newspaper, reading trade books with a teacher or friend, and reading and listening to books on tape. Children also constructed messages by drawing, and by playing and writing music.

Though many of these productions were unconventional by adult standards, the teachers respected and supported children's attempts at using literacy by asking them to read their written texts, to tell about their pictures, and to sing or play their musical texts. Teachers also provided literacy demonstrations by authoring their own written, artistic, and musical texts at the learning centers. In this way, children were encouraged to learn about literacy by using it and by watching their teachers and peers use it, and literacy instruction was embedded in informal discussions about in-process authoring activities. Though teachers frequently provided children with a variety of types of information about literacy, these discussions grew out of the questions and comments children made as they worked on their own texts or watched others, rather than from teacher-directed group lessons about literacy skills.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection and data analysis were intertwined in this study. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested, in ethnographic research "data analysis must begin with the very first data collection in order to facilitate the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases" (p. 242). As seen in Table 1, this study proceeded through four phases in which the focus and techniques of data collection, the amount of time spent in the classroom, and the data analysis techniques varied. A brief description of these activities is provided below. (For additional details, see Author, 1986.)

Insert Table 1 about here.

Phase 1: Field Entry

In the first phase of research, lasting one month, I entered the classroom and focused on becoming familiar with the setting, negotiating my role with the children and teachers, determining the range and location of classroom literacy events, and deciding on a data collection unit. To facilitate my acceptance as part of the classroom community and to allow me to become familiar with literacy activities in all parts of the school day, I participated in the classroom four full days per week in activities ranging from small and large groups, to "free choice" time activities, outdoor play, transitions, and trips to the library. Within the first two weeks I adopted an interactive stance much like that of the teachers. That is, I talked with children as they worked at the literacy centers, I authored my own pictures, notes, books, etc., I read books, I facilitated children's work by helping them get needed materials and space for their work, and I mediated any problems which the children could not resolve by themselves. However, my role differed from that of the classroom teachers in three major ways: (a) I rarely directed group activities, (b) I spent the majority of my time observing and participating in literacy activities at the learning centers, and (c) I consistently used a variety of techniques to record classroom events. Overall, the children viewed me as an assistant teacher.

My major data collection techniques during this period were (a) participant/observation, (b) writing field notes, methodological notes, and theoretical notes after leaving the classroom, (c) collecting samples of children's writing, and (d) conducting informal interviews with the teachers. Data analysis primarily consisted of weekly reviews of field notes. From these reviews came two methodological decisions. First, I decided to concentrate subsequent observations on children's self-selected literacy activities at the writing and art tables during the morning and afternoon free choice times. I also collected data during group activities because they served as important background for understanding self-selected text production events. A second methodological decision involved the definition of a data collection unit. Because I felt I had the most to gain from defining *literacy events* broadly, I decided to observe children from the time they arrived at a literacy center until they left the center to begin a different kind of activity -- a definition similar to the one Corsaro (1985) used to define interactive events in his ethnographic study of friendships in a preschool setting.

Phase 2: Identifying Patterns and Developing Hypotheses

The second phase of the study began at the start of my second month in the classroom and focused on identifying patterns in the literacy learning of individual children and in the social interactions in which this learning was embedded. A variety of new data collection techniques were used including brief field notes written in the classroom, audiotape, and photography. I also used informal interview techniques to gain information from the children about their text construction processes, their literacy learning strategies, and their intended meanings for unconventional texts. During this phase I provided the teachers with copies of my expanded field notes and samples of the children's work. In indefinite triangulation sessions (Cicourel, 1974; Denzin, 1978), and in informal conversations in the classroom, they responded to my interpretations of classroom events, and shared their own observations of children's literacy learning.

Data analysis during this phase consisted of weekly reviews of my field notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes, and literacy artifacts, and served three main purposes: a) estimating the obtrusiveness of the new data collection techniques to plan adjustments in data collection procedures, b) determining the relative representation of each of the 21 children in the data to guide subsequent data collection, and c) identifying patterns in the data to generate working hypotheses about literacy learning. To do this I used the constant comparative method as described by Glaser & Strauss (1967). This involved searching for patterns in the data by rereading each entry in my field notes, making marginal notations of the category or categories to which it belonged, and comparing it to others in that category. At the end of Phase 2, I conducted an extensive review of the categories and almost 40 tentative hypotheses generated in this fashion during the first 4 months of participant/observation. This list of hypotheses became the basis for theoretical sampling in Phase 3 of the study.

Phase 3: Theoretical Sampling

The primary focus of the third phase of data collection was the use of theoretical sampling to further develop and refine the hypotheses generated in the first 4 months of research. Using the inventory of hypotheses generated at the end of Phase 2, I determined which hypotheses already had a strong base of support in the data, and which ones needed to be explored further. I used this list as a basis for focusing data collection during the next 2 months. During this period, I began to videotape classroom literacy

events in addition to using the previously introduced data collection methods. Data analysis involved weekly reviews of field notes and videotapes to determine the types of events which should be targeted as high priority for theoretical sampling the next week, the use of the constant comparative method for generating grounded hypotheses, and reviews of methodological notes to estimate the obtrusiveness of the videotape equipment.

Phase 4: Field Exit

In the last phase of the study, my research efforts turned from data collection to data analysis and the amount of time spent in the classroom was gradually reduced to 2 mornings per week. Using field notes, audio tape, and collection of children's texts, I focused my attention on collecting data which would support, extend, or challenge the patterns I was pursuing in data analysis. Also during this period, I conducted interviews with the teachers to discuss the theoretical beliefs guiding their curriculum.

During these last months in the classroom, and continuing after my withdrawal from the setting, data analysis activities involved transcription and microsociolinguistic analysis of the videotape data, as well as additional analyses of the field notes and artifacts to refine hypotheses about literacy learning. (See Appendix A for the transcription conventions used in this paper.) Data analysis procedures aimed at understanding the role of social interaction in children's literacy learning processes focused on identifying patterns in a) conversational topics introduced at the writing table, b) social roles played by participants, c) participation patterns in literacy events, d) characteristics of the author and audience roles, and e) connections between social interaction and children's literacy learning. In each case, I began with general patterns in my theoretical notes, and proceeded to refine them through microanalysis of the 50 events videotaped at the writing table. Specifically, I selected 10 videotaped events which seemed to represent a wide range of interaction patterns. From repeated viewings of these tapes I generated categories of topics, roles, and participation patterns which were subsequently refined and tested on the 40 remaining videotapes of events at the writing table.

To investigate how children and adults played the roles of author and audience in different types of events, I transcribed three events from each of the six major participation patterns, and conducted a microsociolinguistic analysis of the speech styles used by adults and children. Since there had been considerable work on the interactive styles used in conversation between children and adults and between

peers in preschool settings, I began this analysis with a tentative list of speech styles from the work of Cook-Gumperz (1981; Cook-Gumperz & Corsaro, 1977) and Corsaro (1977, 1979), and modified it to account for the types of exchanges occurring in the literacy events being analyzed. As a result, the list of speech styles presented in Appendix B was used to code each statement or question recorded on the transcripts.

After each of the 18 transcripts had been coded, the number of exchanges involving each speech style was tallied so that general patterns could be observed. Frequencies were tabulated for each of the three types of author/audience dyads seen in the data (i.e., adult as author/child as audience, child as author/adult as audience, and child as author/child as audience). Because factors such as the presence or absence of an adult, the extent to which participants were actively involved in producing their own texts, the number of participants present, the length of the episode, and the unique characteristics of ongoing events strongly influenced the absolute amount of peer and adult interaction in any event, these frequency distributions were examined only for general patterns in the range of speech acts used by children and adults as they played the author and audience roles. To systematically describe the impact of these social interaction patterns on children's literacy learning it was necessary to search the data for instances where social exchanges *explicitly* influenced children's literacy knowledge or their text production activities. Together these analyses led to the generation of grounded hypotheses about the role of social interaction in young children's self-selected literacy activities at the writing table.

A final task informing my data analysis, a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), occurred after the completion of the first draft of the initial report of this research (Author, 1986). Since the age of the children participating in this study prevented sharing the report directly with them, I asked the teachers and director of the daycare center to respond to my description of life and learning in this setting. They expressed strong support for my accounts of classroom events, and provided suggestions for minor changes. This information was used in revising final accounts of the research.

Findings

Because it has been my purpose in this study to understand literacy learning as a social event, it has been important to systematically describe this interaction and to search the data for evidence of its

impact on children's literacy learning. Reported below are patterns observed in a) the social interaction which occurred as part of children's self-selected literacy activities at the writing table, and b) the literacy behavior and learning outcomes explicitly linked to social interaction in these events.

The Nature of Social Interaction in Children's Self-Selected Literacy Activities

General Patterns in Social Interaction

In this setting, most of the students visited the writing table at some time during the two long work periods to produce a text or to interact with others who were writing or drawing. The events in which children's text production activities were embedded were multi-focused social events in which a number of texts were being produced and a number of conversations were occurring simultaneously. Within a single event, participants often had opportunities to track and participate in a variety of conversations. Analysis of these conversations revealed that talk focused around four major *topics*: (a) texts and authoring processes, (b) access to space and materials, (c) social relationships, and (d) other personal concerns and interests. Authoring, as the designated activity in these areas, received the most attention.

A second focus of analysis in this study was the description of the social *roles* involved in the joint production of literacy events by participants at the writing table. An important observation was that as children and adults participated at the writing table, they frequently shifted stances from *author* to *audience*. In this study, participants were identified as authors when they produced their own graphic or written texts, and as audiences when they read or discussed their own texts or text production processes, or those of other participants. In some activities, they also worked as *co-authors* to create a shared text. Each of these roles of was frequently taken by children and adults participating at the writing table.

Because these first two analyses indicated that activity at the writing center almost always involved both text production and social interaction, and because one aim of this study was to describe how literacy learning processes were embedded in social interaction, I used a combination of social and text production features to further describe literacy events in terms of seven general *participation patterns*. As seen in Table 2, the first four participation patterns describe interactions occurring when authors gathered to work and talk about their *individual* texts. The fifth and sixth interaction patterns describe participants' attempts to coordinate their activities so that shared texts resulted, and the seventh pattern describes encounters between authors and persons not working at the center. This paper will

specifically focus on the impact of social interaction on children's *individual text production activities*. (See Author, 1986 for a discussion of co-authored writing events.)

Insert Table 2 about here.

Patterns in Author/Audience Conversation

To describe more specifically how social interaction affected participants' texts and literacy learning, a fine-grained analysis of author/audience interaction was needed. Using the microsociolinguistic analysis procedures described earlier, I identified the characteristic *conversational* styles of children and adults as they acted as authors and audiences at the writing table.

An important aspect of this analysis was an examination of the data for similarities and differences in the ways adults and children played the author and audience roles with each other, and the ways these roles were enacted between peers. This analysis was important because previous researchers (Cook-Gumperz & Corsaro,1977) had observed that preschool teachers controlled the flow of interaction in the areas of the classroom where children completed art and writing activities. For example, speaking of the the area where art and writing occurred, Cook-Gumperz & Corsaro (1977) concluded that "children play a limited role in the initiation, construction, and maintenance of social interaction in this ecological area of the school. The achievement of ordered productions in this area is the result of how the *teachers* address and respond to the children" (p. 427). Their observations indicated that when teachers were present during writing or art activities, their primary role was to maintain children's participation in teacher selected activities. The children's decision-making roles were limited.

My observations in this setting indicated that the teachers' curricular decisions a) to create a collaborative environment in which both children and adults were equally recognized and valued as capable authors, and b) to encourage children to see their peers as valuable sources of help and information created conditions for writing which were very different from those described by Cook Gumperz and Corsaro (1977). Since these curricular beliefs were influential in shaping the classroom context in which these children learned about literacy, it was important to carefully examine the data to see how the various groups of participants actually played their roles as authors and audiences.

The remainder of this section discusses the interaction patterns characteristic of each of the three types of author/audience dyads which were common at the writing table in this classroom: a) child as

author/adult as audience, b) adult as author/child as audience, and c) child as author/child as audience. In order to provide a view of the complex nature of events at the writing table, I have chosen to use as the primary focus for this discussion an event (Examples 1A - 1H) which includes interactions between each of the three types of author/audience groups. This narrative also provides a good illustration of the type of multi-focused action and interaction which occurred daily at the writing table. Over the course of this event, both the participants and the focus of conversation change, depending on the current interests and needs of those present. For example, conversation starts as Selma and I talk about the texts we are producing, then the focus shifts as I respond to her request for help in drawing a monkey. The event continues as Kyle and I question Jared about his text, and ends with Kyle's request that Jared help him with a text he has just begun. Participants actively track the activities of others at the table, and at various times enter the conversation to talk about their own text production activities, or the texts which are being produced by others.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Before, examining the transcript of this event in detail, it possible to identify several general patterns in the talk of adults and children as they played the author and audience roles. An initial inspection of Table 3, the frequency distribution of speech styles used in Example 1, indicates that a considerable amount of talk occurred between adults and children. Though this and most other writing table events also included exchanges between peers, it was common for adult/child conversation to comprise a larger proportion of the conversation than child/child conversation. Table 3 also demonstrates that in this event there were similarities between the styles used by each of the three types of author/audience dyads. Most obvious is the large number of information statements used by authors and audiences of all ages. A second pattern demonstrated by the table is the tendency of both adult and child audiences use suggestive statements and information requests to make suggestions and ask questions of the authors with whom they interacted. However, in this event there were also differences in the speech styles used by adults and children. Only adults used evaluative statements, tag questions, requests for joint action, and clarification requests. On the other hand, only children used requests for behavior and summons. Some of these stylistic differences are specific to the interactions which occurred in this event. However, several of these patterns in child and adult speech styles were common across the data.

Specifically, as in this event, adults tended to use a wider variety of speech styles to request and clarify the information they received from children. In addition, they more frequently provided evaluations of children's work than vice versa. Children, however, did evaluate one another's work. Also, as in this event, it was children who most often made requests for behavior from their peers and teachers.

Thus, microanalysis of conversations at the writing table indicated that some differences existed between adult and child roles in this context. Examination of these differences indicated that they stemmed primarily from the participants' recognition of the varying expertise of adult and child authors. However, overall the styles of talk were more related to the roles the participants played, than to their ages. In situations where participants' roles as author and audience were reversed, so were many features of their talk. Analysis of the speech acts in relation to child and adult goals as authors and audiences indicated that both groups had constructed similar views of these roles. Evidence for these conclusions will be presented below by examining the author and audience speech styles of adults and children in the writing event described earlier. To facilitate discussion, this event has been segmented and presented as Examples 1A - 1H. To illustrate conversational patterns not represented in this event, brief examples from other events will also be included.

Child as author/adult as audience interactions. When children authored their own texts at the writing table, conversations with adult audiences were sometimes initiated by children, and sometimes by adults. Example 1 contains illustrations of both patterns.

Example 1A: February 3, 1986 (VT 11)

(3) Selma, a native Arabic speaker who has only recently begun to learn English, begins to talk excitedly from across the table, but I can't understand her.
(4) Debbie: "What?"
(5) Selma: "I gotta (*)." [gestures to indicate that she talking about her paper]
(6) Debbie: "What did you make?"
(7) Selma: "(a wart)"
(8) Debbie: "Did ya?"

Near the beginning of this event at utterance 1:(3), Selma enters the conversation to *tell me about her text.* Though the flow of talk is limited by my inability to understand her accented English, the pattern of exchanges is similar to many others in which children initiated conversations to talk about their newest discoveries or their plans for their texts. As author, Selma uses information statements at

utterances 1:(3), (5), and (7) to tell me about her text, and as audience I use clarification requests, (1:(4),(7)), and an information request, (1:(6)), to *clarify statements* which I don't understand, and to *encourage her to tell me more* about her text. Though in this case I end the conversation without a true understanding of what she has said, the pattern of questioning is typical of many adult responses to children's talk about their texts.

Later in this episode, at utterance 1:(22) Selma again initiates a conversation with me, but this time for the purpose of *obtaining help* with a text-related problem.

Example 1B

Selma brings a piece of paper and a fat green pencil to my place at the writing table.
(22) Selma: "I can't do it."
(23) Debbie: "Tell me what you want it to do?"
(24) Selma: "Ummm, that!" [points to her paper and then to the photograph of a monkey on the calendar]
(25) Debbie: "Oh, you want to draw a monkey?" (26) "I think you -- Oh, you already erased some, didn't you? [looking at erasures on Selma's paper] (27) I don't know if I can draw a monkey either, but let me think!"
Jared and Kyle are both watching now. I verbally describe my steps as I draw.
(28) Debbie: "A monkey kinda has a round face. (29) And he's got kind of a nose like that, and eyes, and he's got kind of a big mouth."
(30) Selma: "Wow!"
(31) Debbie: "Look at his big mouth! (32) Kind of a great big one." (33) And then he's kind of black and furry. (34) I'm not really great at drawing monkeys. . . (35) but lets give him some hair."
(36) Selma: "Look, it's long!".
(37) Debbie: "It looks more like a girl, doesn't it? (38) Let's give him a tail. (39) Long tail, and long furry arms. (40) Long monkey arms. (41) And big ears. (42) Monkeys have great big ears. (43) How about that?"
By this time Jared and Kyle are bent close to my paper to see the progress of the drawing, though from time to time they check the photograph of the monkey.
(44) Debbie: "You probably drew as good a monkey as I do. (45) You try!" [pushing the paper back to Selma]

(49) Debbie: You drew one."

In this series of exchanges I interpret Selma's opening statement, 1:(22) "I can't do it." as a request for behavior because she also lays her paper and pencil in front of me. The exchanges which follow once again involve my use of information requests, clarification requests, and finally a tag question to encourage her to elaborate on the type of help needed so that I can *respond to her request.* In this case, she is requesting that I shift to the author role to do some drawing for her. After drawing my version of a monkey, I return to the role of audience using suggestive statements (1:(45) "You try."; 1:(49) "You drew one.") to *offer my suggestions* about what she should do next.

Example 1 also illustrates some common conversational patterns which occurred when adults initiated conversations in their role as audience. At utterances 1:(51-53) I initiate conversation with Selma to find out if the unconventional squiggles on her paper are her attempts at drawing a monkey.

Example 1C

(51) Debbie: "Did you drew him?"
(52) Selma: "Yes."
(53) Debbie: "Good."

When she responds positively, I answer with an evaluative statement, 1:(53) "Good." Though this is the only evaluative statement in this event, it was not uncommon for adults to include positive evaluative comments when they served as audiences for children's texts. As in this case, their purposes for offering these *evaluations* was, almost without exception, to encourage children in their authoring activities.

The other instance in Example 1 where an adult initiates a conversation with a child about his or her text occurs at utterances 1:(54-64) when I talk with Jared to learn more about the picture he has been drawing.

Example 1D

(54) Debbie: "Boy, Jared's got all kinds of hearts on his picture!"
(55) Selma: "Hearts."
(56) Debbie: "Look at his hearts. (57) Is that a Valentine picture, Jared?"
(58) Jared: "Yes,for my Mom."
(59) Debbie: "Who's that?" [pointing to the figure he has drawn]
(60) Jared: "Me."
(61) Debbie: "That's you?" (62) And look at all the hearts!"
(63) Jared: "That's why I'm happy." [points to the face of the person in the drawing]
(64) Debbie: "Yeah?"

In this case I open the conversation with an information statement *expressing my interpretation* of Jared's text. This statement functions as an indirect request for Jared to talk about his text. When he fails to respond, at utterances 1:(57) and (59)I use a more direct approach -- information requests -- to check my interpretation of his text, and to gain more information about a specific feature of it. As he begins to participate in the conversation I use clarification requests and another information statement to encourage him to elaborate on the content of his piece.

The child as author/adult as audience exchanges in Example 1 illustrate conversational patterns typical of the events observed at the writing table. When adults acted as audiences for children in this classroom they used a variety of speech styles to clarify what children said, to get more information about their texts, and to express and check their interpretations of the texts. Adults also responded to children's

requests for help and made suggestions for their authoring activities. Evaluations of children's texts or activities were used by adults as a means of encouraging their participation in writing and drawing. When children acted as authors, they talked with adults about their texts -- sometimes in response to audience questions, and sometimes by initiating conversation for that purpose. Children also asked adult authors for help with their authoring problems.

Adult as author/child as audience interactions. In this classroom, when the teachers and I were present at the writing table, we not only acted as audiences for the children's texts, but also authored our own texts. These activities grew out of a conscious curricular decision to provide demonstrations of literacy in use and opportunities for collaborative interaction between teachers and children. Though my authoring activities in Example 1 are limited, I do produce two kinds of texts. My statements about the first text, a note to a child, occur near the beginning of the event.

Example 1E

(1) Debbie: "Today was --" [begins to write the date at the top of a note]

(9) Debbie: "I'm gonna turn the calender to February to see what day it is."
(10) Debbie: "February third." [looking at calender and writing the date]

These information statements are not specifically directed to other participants, but instead are a kind of *self-directed monologue* describing my in-process authoring activities, and helping me organize my initial steps in text production. The second text I produce in this event is the drawing of a monkey requested by Salma in Example 1B. Once again I *describe my in-process authoring activities* with information statements (e.g., 1:(29) And he's got kind of a nose like that, and eyes, and he's got kind of a big mouth."). However, as indicated by my use of requests for joint action (e.g., 1:(38) "Let's give him a tail."), the purpose of this descriptive talk is to provide a verbal description of my authoring activities for Salma, who, by virtue of her request for help, is an interested audience. She confirms this by entering the conversation to make occasional *comments about my drawing* (e.g., 1:(36) "Look it's long" [the tail].)

In Example 1 most of the adult authoring activity occurred in response to a child's request for assistance. However, in other events, adults initiated and worked on texts of their own choice much as Salma and Jared do in Example 1. When this occurred, interactions between adults and the children acting as their audiences involved other types conversational exchanges not seen in Example 1. Two additional

examples are included below to illustrate these other patterns. The first one, Example 2, illustrates children's use of information requests to get additional information about adult texts.

Example 2: January 20, 1986 (VT 4)

Kira watches me write a note. (43) "Who's it gonna be to?"
(44) "I need to answer some mail I got from Victor earlier," I tell her as I begin to write 'Dear'.

Christina stops working on her map and leans over to look at what I've written. (49) " Victor starts with 'D'?"
(50) "No," I explain, "this word is 'dear'. (51) 'Dear Victor'. (52) That's how I'm gonna start the letter."

As these exchanges demonstrate, children, like adult audiences, used information requests *to get specific kinds of information about adult texts* and *to check their interpretations of these texts.*

Example 3, also from another event, illustrates adult authors' uses of requests for assistance and their younger audiences' use of suggestive statements -- a pattern also observed in child as author/adult as audience interactions.

Example 3: February 25, 1986 (AT 70B)

I join a group of children making pages for a "Get Well" book for Carol, a teacher who is in the hospital. (1) "OK. So let's see. . . wonder what color [paper] would make her feel cheery?"
(2) "Red" says Christopher.
(3) "You like the red color a lot?" I ask. (4) "The green is real pretty. (5) So is the yellow."
(6) "Look!" says Victor fingering the papers. (7) "These colors . . ."
Kira interrupts. (8) "Make a heart for Carol. (9) Make a heart for Carol."
(10) "You think she'd like a heart?" I ask.
(11) "Yeah!" Kira replies. "Do it with red, cause I want you to do it with red!"
(12) "OK Kira, I'm thinking about what I might want to draw for her, and I'm afraid it won't show up as well on red. (13) I think I'm gonna choose yellow."

This example demonstrates that adults, like children, sometimes *asked their audiences for assistance* in making text-related decisions. Additionally, it demonstrates that children also *made suggestions for adult texts* as part of their audience role. At utterance 3:(1) I wonder aloud what color paper I should use for my text. Both Christopher and Victor respond with their *suggestions*, and at 3:(8) Kira adds her ideas for the content of the text. At utterances 3:(11, 12), I use information statements to explain my reasons for choosing a different color of paper for my text, demonstrating that in this classroom authors have the final decision about whether or not to follow the advice offered by others.

Together, Examples 1, 2, and 3 illustrate patterns observed across the data in adult as author/child as audience conversations. These patterns are similar in most respects to those observed when

children acted as authors and adults acted as their audiences. That is, like younger authors, when adults constructed their own texts they used talk to guide their own activities, to describe their in-process authoring activities for interested audiences, to respond to questions about their texts, and to request assistance in making decisions about their texts. In a manner similar to adult audiences, children commented on their observations of adults' texts and authoring processes, asked questions aimed at gaining more information about adult texts, checked their own interpretations of the texts, and offered suggestions for adults' authoring activities.

Child as author/child as audience interactions. A third type of social interaction involved text-related conversation between peers. The conversational exchanges between Jared and Kyle in Example 1 are typical of the types of speech events which occurred when children assumed both author and audience roles. Throughout the first 77 exchanges of this event, Kyle participates at the writing table only in the audience role. A good deal of his attention is directed to Jared's writing and drawing activities, and on two occasions he initiates conversations with Jared.

Example 1F

(11) Kyle: "Jared?"
No reply.
(12) Kyle: "Jared, would you (* * * *)?"
Jared continues working on his text without replying.

Kyle's first attempt to gain Jared's attention through the use of a summons at 1:(11) receives no reply as Jared continues to focus on his drawing. His subsequent request for behavior at 1:(12) is also unsuccessful at initiating a conversation. In this instance, Jared illustrates the general participation pattern of individual authoring described earlier. Though conversation was an important part of the activity at the table, there were times when authors resisted attempts to draw them into conversation so that their full attention could remain on the text production activities underway.

After Jared had almost completed his text, Kyle once again initiated a conversation about it -- this time successfully.

Example 1G

Jared turns his paper over and begins to write, right to left, across the top of his paper. ( ). He starts a second line in the same direction. ( ).
(67) Kyle: "Jared? How come you always write your name backwards?"
(69) Jared: "I don't! (70) Sometimes I just write (different). [moves pencil right to left across paper] (71) Then at the bottom I write it. [points to bottom of paper] (72) Sometimes I write it at the top!" [points to top of paper] Jared begins a third line of writing, once again, right to left

with Kyle watching. ( ). He adds a fourth line ( ), once again, right to left.
(73) Kyle: "And I said to my Mom (* * * *). (74) I said, 'I want to write my name backwards too.'"
(75) Jared: [laughs and reads the already completed letters of the fifth line] "J A R." [writes and says] "E D."
Jared holds his paper up for Kyle to see, and then lays it on the table and begins to read. He starts at the top, running his finger right to left under each line as he reads, making sure to end his speech when his finger comes to the end of a line.
(76) Jared: (Line 1) "Once there was me, (Line 2) hiding in a prickle bush. (Line 3) I saw some hearts (Line 4) in a tree. (Line 5) Jared."
(77) Jared: [begins to say and write] "M, O, M."

In a pattern now familiar from the discussion of adult/child interaction, at 1:(67) Kyle uses an information request to *seek information about Jared's authoring processes*. In his response, Jared uses information statements to deny Kyle's claim that he writes "backwards" and to *verbally describe how he constructs his texts*. At 1:(73) Kyle drops his challenge in favor of describing a related conversation with his mother. Following this exchange Jared uses *self-directed talk* to guide him in completing the remaining letters in his name -- a task originally interrupted by Kyle's questions. Since he is now aware of Kyle's interest in his text, at utterance 1:(76) he spontaneously reads the entire text, pointing to the print so that Kyle can see. At 1:(77) Jared finishes the text by naming each letter aloud as he writes "MOM" -- talk which seems to function both to *describe and direct his in-process authoring activities*.

Near the end of Example 1, after watching Jared and talking with him about his text, Kyle begins his own text. When he encounters problems, he approaches Jared for help.

Example 1H

(78) Kyle: "Could you please make my heart?"
(79) Jared: "Well, hearts go like this!" [traces the shape of one of his hearts with his finger]
(80) Kyle: "I mean, I can't do that."
(81) Jared: "Oh, you made it the wrong way!" [draws a heart on Kyle's paper]
(82) Kyle: "(Put the) inside the hearts. (83) Would you write K Y L E?"
(84) Jared: "K." [writes K]
(85) Kyle: "Y L E," Kyle prompts as Jared finishes writing the rest of the letters.

Kyle uses a request for behavior at 1:(78) to *ask help of another author* perceived as more expert. This request is much like Selma's request that I help her draw a monkey at 1:(22), except in this case the more expert author is a child rather than a teacher. Unlike Selma, however, Kyle uses information statements(1:(78), (85)), a suggestive statement (1:(82)), and a request for behavior(1:(83)) to

negotiate with Jared the exact type of help needed to complete the text he has planned. In effect, Kyle does the mental work to construct the text, and "subcontracts" with Jared to do the actual graphic transcription.

A final speech style observed in child/child interaction is the use of direct requests for evaluation. In Example 4 below Kyle demonstrates how children sometimes asked their peers to evaluate their work.

Example 4: February 4, 1986 (VT 14)

Kyle arrives at the writing table. (14) "Do you like the spider web I made?" he asks Andy.
(15) "No I don't like them," Andy responds.
(16) "Then I'll make it a pretty spider web," Kyle tells him.
(17) "Yuk, I don't like spider webs," Andy reiterates.
(18) "I like spider webs," Kyle says "when the spiders are (**)!" He draws a spider web, then says the letters of his name aloud as he writes them. (19) "K Y L E."

In this event, Kyle's *request for evaluation* at 4:(14) is met with Andy's negative *evaluation* of the topic Kyle has chosen for his text. This leads Kyle to form a plan to make a more acceptable text at 4:(16), and sparks a continued exchange of opinions on the subject of spider webs. Though in this event, the request for evaluation results in a text-focused discussion, in other cases children's requests for evaluation functioned primarily as a means for checking their friendship status with their peers, and texts were accepted or rejected on the basis of membership in the friendship group, rather than on the qualities of the text itself (Author, 1986). Unlike adult audiences, who almost always made positive evaluations of children's texts, children responded to their peers' requests for evaluation with both positive and negative feedback depending on the social situation in which the request was embedded.

Thus, when children played author and audience roles with one another, their interactions were similar in many ways to the adult/child interactions described in earlier sections. Specifically, when children authored their own texts, they responded to audience interpretations and questions about their texts, described their in-process authoring activities, used self-directed talk to organize and guide their activities, and requested assistance with authoring problems. Alternately, when they played the audience role for their peers they offered interpretations, sought additional information, and made suggestions about their texts and activities. They also responded to authors' requests for help, and offered solicited and unsolicited evaluations of the texts being produced. In addition to these patterns, children sometimes directly requested their peers' evaluations of their texts. It was not uncommon for children to request

evaluation from adults, but adult requests for children's evaluations of their texts were very infrequent in the data. Therefore, this feature of the author role was applicable primarily for children.

Summary. Microsociolinguistic analysis of author/audience conversations occurring at the writing table, provides two major insights into the nature of social interaction in which children's writing was embedded. First, it answers questions raised about similarities and differences in adult and child roles in writing events. Fine-grained analysis of the speech used by adults and children at the writing table reveals that, for the most part, both groups were constructing similar understandings of the author and audience roles. Unlike the preschool writing/drawing events described by Cook Gumperz and Corsaro (1977), children and adults *jointly* negotiated the direction of writing events in this classroom. That is, both children and adults entered the flow of conversation to meet their own needs as authors, to satisfy their curiosity as audiences, and to respond to the needs and curiosity of other participants. The collaborative nature of this social environment is demonstrated by the fact that adults and children played the author and audience roles in ways that were much more similar than different.

Second, this microanalysis has yielded a description of the characteristic features of the conversational roles of authors and audiences in this setting. Table 4 summarizes the characteristics of the author and audience roles across the three types of author/audience pairs. Underlined at the top of this table are the participatory roles on which the conversational roles are based. As noted, all patterns were characteristic of both adults' and children's interactions, except requests for evaluation which were almost exclusively used by children.

Insert Table 4 about here.

As the preceding discussion illustrates, when participants talked with one another about on-going text production activities, they assumed the role of either author or audience, and assigned the opposite role to their conversational partner. But these roles were related in another way as well; that is, participants usually shifted stances from author to audience within the same event as they authored their own texts and talked with others about the texts being constructed around them. Therefore, audiences listened, watched, and read using their experience as authors. Authors wrote and drew using their experiences as audiences. Regardless of stance, participants were gathering information which could be used later in their own text production activities as well as in their attempts to read other authors' texts.

Connections Between Social Interaction and Literacy Learning

Descriptions of the author/audience conversations at the writing table provide evidence important for understanding the nature of the social interaction in which children's literacy learning was embedded in this setting. However, in order to form hypotheses about *how* these interactions affected children's literacy learning, it is also necessary to systematically describe the types of learning which occurred as a result of social interaction. Though it is not always possible to directly observe the effects of social interaction either on children's literacy knowledge or on their texts, analyses of the field notes, artifacts, audiotape and videotape data collected over the 8 months of the study revealed that there were many instances in which children's text production activities or literacy knowledge were explicitly affected by their interactions with other authors. These analyses indicated that it was not only author/audience conversation which affected children's texts, but also the *demonstrations* of authoring to which conversations were linked. Smith (1982) has described demonstrations as acts and artifacts which display "what can be done and how" (p. 101). My observations suggest that literacy demonstrations also showed children *why*-- for what purposes -- they might use writing and art, as well. In most events, conversation, observation of demonstrations, and authoring occurred together. Therefore, data analysis aimed at observing the effects of social interaction involved a search for patterns in events where children's conversations and texts were explicitly linked to the conversation and demonstrations of others at the writing table. Table 5 lists the 9 types of learning outcomes observed to be linked to social interaction in this data. Additional information about these patterns is provided below.

Insert Table 5 about here.

As discussed earlier in this paper, authors and audiences spent a considerable portion of their time and used a variety of speech styles to provide each other with information about the content of their texts, their authoring processes, and their purposes for writing and drawing. Interactions of this sort encouraged children to *activate their existing knowledge* related to the topics being discussed or the authoring activities observed, and frequently resulted in the inclusion of these topics or processes in their own texts. In short, social interaction served as a source of ideas for children's texts, and often resulted in obvious links between the texts produced by authors participating together in literacy events. By tracking

the manner in which children at the writing table linked their texts to those of other authors, I identified two ways in which children used these conversations and demonstrations as a source of ideas. In the first and most frequently observed pattern, children used content or processes demonstrated by other authors as the *beginning points* for their own texts. As they worked on their pieces, they recognized the potential for combining some elements of the demonstration with elements from their own experience so that the result fit the texts they were creating. That is, they used conversation and demonstrations to help them generate ideas for topics or processes which would later be modified, expanded or revised as they constructed their own texts. An instance of this pattern appears in Example 10 when Kyle decides at 1:(78-85) to create a text containing hearts and his name, after watching Jared author a Valentine story for his mother which contained hearts, a picture of himself, a story, his signature, and the word "MOM". In this case, Kyle uses demonstrations as a springboard for developing and extending his existing ideas, and for helping him explore new aspects of literacy.

While children most frequently used demonstrations as starting points for their texts, in some instances they tried to *reproduce* as much of the demonstrated content and processes as possible in their own work. In this classroom there was no injunction against "copying", neither was there encouragement to stick closely to the demonstrations presented by others. Instead, children were free to choose whether, and how, to link their texts to those of other participants. I observed that children most often chose to attempt to reproduce demonstrations when they were beginning to explore new content or processes, when their work had been negatively evaluated by another author, and when they wanted to form friendship relationships with other authors at the table.

A second way social interaction was observed to affect children's literacy learning was by providing *confirmation of their existing literacy knowledge*. Though interacting with others at the writing table undoubtedly confirmed children's understandings of literacy in a variety of subtle ways, examination of the data revealed that children *consciously* used social interaction to clear up doubts about their own literacy knowledge. This often involved the use of direct questions aimed at seeking confirmation or disconfirmation of their existing literacy hypotheses. Christina demonstrates this pattern in Example 2 as she watches me write a note to Victor. Because she is familiar with the spelling of her classmate's name, she is puzzled that the first word in my note begins with an upper case D. At 2:(49) she

asks, "Victor starts with a D?". My response at 2:(50-52), "No, this word is 'dear.' 'Dear Victor.' That's how I'm gonna start this letter.", provides specific information about my text and confirms Christina's understanding that Victor's name would not be written with an upper case D, but instead with an upper case V.

Interaction with other authors not only provided confirmation of children's existing knowledge, but also encouraged them to *form new literacy knowledge*. As children worked at the writing table, they were frequently introduced to new experiences and concepts through conversation and observation of the demonstrations of other participants. As a result they formed new concepts about literacy. Example 5 demonstrates how children worked together to construct concepts about a newly introduced literacy tool--a staple remover.

Example 5: January 20, 1986 (VT 4)

Jared has been working on a figure of a dog with a backpack at the writing table when he discovers a staple remover on the table. Mary, one of his teachers, has left it there after taking the staples from scrap paper donated by the parents.

(1) "What is this?" he asks.

(2) "That's a staple remover," I tell him. (3) "Do you wanta take this staple out? (4) I'll show you how it works." I talk as I demonstrate. (5) "It kind of grabs the staple and takes it out." Christina comes over to watch.

(6) "My dad has one of those," Jared comments as we return to the writing table with the staple remover. When he first tries to use it he positions it so the teeth are on either side of the paper. When he squeezes he punches two holes in his figure. He repositions it correctly and this time it works.

^^^

Christina takes the staple remover from Jared. Like Jared, She punches holes in her paper on the first attempt, but she experiments a bit and gets it to work.

^^^

(16) Christina reaches for the staple remover again. (17) "It grabbed it," she comments. (18) "I call this the grabber."

(19) "That's exactly what it does, grabs staples," I agree.

(20) "We can call it the grab stapler," she suggests. She continues to play with a name for the new piece of equipment. (21) "Staple grabber, grabber. (22) It's a staple grabber." After another turn she works on the name a bit more, (23) "I call this a staple regrabber." On her next turn she comments to herself, (24) "I use the staple regrabber! (25) Is staple regrabber a funny name?"

Sarah has been drawing pictures on napkins at the far side of the table. Now she enters this activity. She staples her napkins together on one side like a book. Jared has the staple remover, so she says (26) "Staple regrabber. (27) I need the staple regrabber. (28) I need the staple regrabber. (29) I need the staple grabber!"

(30) "Staple regrabber," Christina corrects.

When Jared is finished Sarah takes the staple out of her book.

In this event, Jared, Christina, and Sarah have opportunities to form new knowledge about the staple remover through using it, talking about it, and watching the demonstrations provided by other authors. Jared's initial comments and use of the staple remover at 5:(1, 6) indicate that he has seen this

tool at home, but that his knowledge of its purpose and use is limited. Christina's inexpert use of the staple remover on her first try indicates that her knowledge is also limited. Over the course of the event, Christina invents a name for the staple remover (i.e., "staple regrabber"), and both she and Jared form hypotheses about ways it can be used in text production. After listening to Jared and Christina's conversation and observing their demonstrations, Sarah provides evidence at 5:(26-29) that she has also constructed knowledge of the uses and newly invented name for the staple remover. As this event illustrates, through social interaction at the writing table children were introduced to new literacy experiences and had opportunities to negotiate the meaning of those experiences with other participants.

The formation of new literacy knowledge is particularly clear in Example 5 because the children had had only minimal exposure to staple removers prior to this event. However, there are many instances in the data where literacy knowledge was formed when "new" aspects of familiar literacy demonstrations were highlighted through social interaction. Example 6 (a continuation of the event described in Example 3) illustrates how social interaction at the writing table highlighted the function of exclamation points for several children, and helped them to form new understandings about this punctuation mark.

Example 6: February 25, 1986 (VT 28,29)

One of the teachers is in the hospital, so we are making a "Get Well" book for her. Kira watches as I write my message, "Dear Carol, We hope you get well SOON ! ! ! "

As I write the last word, I read the letters out loud. (59) "S O O N, exclamation point, exclamation point, exclamation point. Because I want her to get well <u>soon</u>!"

Hana asks me what my text says, and I read the message again.

^^^

Kira struggles with the word, but adds, (87) "And this is extamotion point. (88) How come?"

(89) "Put three cause it's big letters," Hana suggests.

(90)"Because I want her to get well really, really, really soon. (91) I want to really emphasize that," I explain.

As we work Kira brings up exclamation points again, and we discuss them.

(99) "And this is extamo. . mo. .motion point cause you want her to get better real, real fast. . . really fast!"

(100) "Um hum," I respond, "an exclamation point makes people know that you really mean it and that you are excited about it. (101)You want her to get well <u>soon!</u> (102)Not just soon, but <u>soon!</u> (103) Right?"

(104)"Real soon," Kira agrees.

^^^

Now Hana begins a page for Carol and fills the bottom with upside down exclamation points. When she is finished she shows it to Susie, one of the classroom teachers. (373) "Carol's really gonna like this one," she says. (374) "There's a question mark -"

(375) "Exclamation point," Susie corrects.

(376) "--exclamation point because I really want her to get well quicker!"

Utterance 6:(87) is the first indication in the data that Kira has noticed exclamation points as a feature of print -- though she has had many previous exposures to them in notes and messages written by teachers, trade books, signs, and so on. In this case, it is informal talk about this aspect of written language, coupled with demonstrations of its use in a functional situation, that encourages Kira to focus on a "new" feature of print, to form new literacy knowledge, and to expand and clarify this knowledge through conversation and observation of the demonstrations of other authors. Overall, social interaction played an important role in exposing children to new literacy experiences, highlighting new features of familiar literacy experiences, and motivating children to seek to understand the activities of their friends and teachers by constructing new hypotheses about literacy.

A fourth type of link between social interaction and children's literacy learning is also demonstrated in Example 6. As authors and audiences exchanged and requested information of one another at the writing table, children frequently encountered challenges to their existing knowledge which led them to *revise their literacy hypotheses*. This occurs in Example 6 for Hana when she offers her hypothesis about the use of exclamation points: 6:(89) "Put three cause it's big letters." My response to Kira's question about exclamation points at 6:(90) and the conversation which follows challenges Hana's current hypothesis about exclamation points, and encourages her to expand and revise it. By utterance 6:(376) Hana provides an explanation for the use of exclamation points in her own text which echoes my explanation to Kira. Though in this event, Hana revised her understanding of exclamation points before beginning her text, in other events, children found text revisions necessary as a result of conversations challenging their knowledge of the content, processes, or purposes of literacy. Thus, social interaction was a major factor motivating children's examination of their existing hypotheses and pushing them to form more adequate understandings of written language.

To this point, social interaction has been shown to encourage children to activate, confirm, and refine their existing knowledge and to form new understandings about literacy. A fifth pattern linking social interaction and literacy learning is the observation that many of *the meanings participants formed in social interaction came to be shared with others in the group*. Example 5 demonstrates the manner in which Jared, Christina, Sarah, and I negotiate our understandings about ongoing activities through conversation and observation of demonstrations and arrive at shared knowledge

about staple removers. This shared literacy knowledge was subsequently used in other event when the children and I used Christine's term, "staple regrabber" to talk about the staple remover. Similarly, Example 6 demonstrates how Kira, Hana, and I built shared understandings about the function of exclamation points.

The pervasiveness of shared literacy knowledge was further documented through an examination of the range of genre and content themes children selected for their texts at the writing table. For example, common genre for texts were surveys, newspaper articles, picture books, wordless books, signs, song books, musical scores, maps, personal letters, signatures, reminder notes, sign-up sheets, and sign-in sheets, and texts frequently shared the content themes of rainbows, snowflakes, hearts, stars, spiders, bears, Cookie Monster, the Wizard of Oz, holidays, Voltran, friends, family members, dinosaurs, and animals. Halliday (1978) has termed the part of the meaning potential which language users associate with a particular context of situation the *register* for that event. These similarities in the content of children's texts, the processes used to construct them, and the purposes for which the texts were used suggests that through many text-focused interactions, children and teachers constructed similar registers for classroom literacy events.

A sixth pattern observed in the data indicates that authors often spontaneously made revisions in their texts and literacy behavior as they talked with audiences about their texts, Unlike the text revisions which resulted from challenges of authors' existing literacy knowledge, these *self-initiated revisions* occurred as children spontaneously shifted from an author stance to become the audience of their own work. This occurred when children noticed gaps between their intended and expressed messages during talks with others about their texts. An example of this type of revision occurred in Example 10. After Jared told me that the text was for his mother, and reread it for Kyle, he added the word 'MOM' as a way of addressing the text to his mother. In many cases, the opportunity for authors to talk about their texts in the presence of an audience encouraged them to reexamine their writing from a new perspective.

A seventh type of link between social interaction and children's literacy behavior indicates that they were not only capable of shifting perspectives to view their work from an audience stance when the social situation required it, but that children were able to *internalize the audience's perspective* in

order to plan a text for an absent audience. Example 7 illustrates how Christina used her knowledge of her audience to plan and guide her text production activities

Example 7: January 29, 1986 (VT 9)

Christina begins her project by selecting a piece of folded tagboard from the rack on the writing table. The tagboard has been donated as scrap paper by one of the parents, so it has words, numbers and lines printed on it in black. She begins to talk about the project she is planning. (102) "Gibson will like this, but it's not for him it's for me." Gibson, one of Christina's best friends, has moved to the older children's classroom at the beginning of the month.

^ ^ ^

She takes a purple marker and begins coloring over the small black numbers printed on the tagboard. As she works, she talks to herself. (117) "But this is for Gibson and he'll like it. He's not gonna be able to see any black because I'm gonna cover the black over with purple. Then the black will be a little purple. That's what's gonna happen to the black." Shaking her head, she reassures herself, "He won't throw it away."

In this case Christina's concerns about covering up the black print grow out of many shared experiences with her friend Gibson, who has often stated that he does not like the color black, and demonstrated this by rejecting texts written or drawn in black marker. Because Christina, and other frequent participants at the writing table had had many text-related discussions with one another over the course of the year, they not only formed shared understandings about the content, processes, and purposes of literacy in this classroom, but also formed shared understandings of the types of responses which were characteristic of other authors. Just as they used information about literacy processes and content constructed in previous interactions to guide their text production, they also used knowledge of their audience to make decisions about their texts. In so doing, they spontaneously shifted between authoring and evaluating their texts from the perspective of their audience -- even when their intended audience was not physically present. In the familiar context of classroom writing activities, children were able not only to become an audience for their own work, but also to imagine how other audiences would respond to their texts. Thus, the 3- and 4-year-olds in this classroom were able to internalize the shifts in stance which occurred in face-to-face interactions between authors and audiences and to strategically use reflective thinking as part of their own writing process.

The eighth pattern linking social interaction and children's literacy activities is perhaps the most obvious. That is, through social interaction children sometimes asked for and received help in completing their texts. This pattern was discussed earlier in relation Selma's request for help in drawing a monkey

in Example 1B, and Kyle's request that Jared help him draw hearts and write his name in Example 1H. Overall, the result of such requests for help was that portions of children's texts were co-authored with other participants. In these cases, authors had the opportunity to *experience the construction of texts which were beyond their ability to produce alone*, and to see how others solved the authoring problems they had encountered. In the process, they often saw demonstrations of more sophisticated literacy conventions and strategies, and had opportunities to negotiate and check their understandings of these processes through conversation.

Because the data for this study was collected by participant/observation over an extended period of of time it was possible for me not only to make the kinds of rich interpretations of children's statements and actions necessary to understand the significance of their literacy behavior in specific situations but to see the connections between events over time. A final observation about the links between social interaction and literacy learning is that in many cases children's social experiences were not reflected in their texts immediately, but appeared later -- sometimes much later -- in other events. Example 8 illustrates how Hana's interest in the date developed and changed over a period of 4 months before it was actually reflected in her writing.

Example 8: January - April, 1986

During the morning group time, Mary usually talks briefly about the date and asks one of the children to move a blue plastic window to the correct number on a big calendar. Over the course of the year, the big calendar was used as a reminder of important dates such as birthdays and holidays. Early in January, I brought another calendar to the room as a present from a trip to the San Diego zoo. After I hung it above the writing table, I began to date my letters in the top right corner so the children could relate the notes to the day they were sent. Hana asked me about this one day, and I explained my reasons for this addition to my letters. Hana showed other signs of interest in the date, too. At group time she often volunteered the name of the day or the month, but she never added a date to her own letters.

However, on **February 17, (VT 21)**, as I was writing her a note, she spontaneously talked with me about her understanding of the use of dates on personal letters.

"Write the date on . . . I know . . .," requests Hana.

I write the word 'Feb.'

"No, the number!" she insists.

I write the number '17.'

"The reason why I want you to write the date is so I don't forget."

"Right!" I reply. "That's why I usually put them on there, 'cause sometimes friends don't check their mailbox every day and then they need to be able to tell which day they got the note on."

After this Hana often told me she knew what my notes said, and read the date in the corner. Still, by the end of March she had never sent me a note with the date on it. One afternoon in April she asked me to come to help her write something. The following excerpt is from my field notes.

April 2, 1986: (FN) Hana called me over and said, "Debbie I want you to help me write something on this paper." I sat down with her at the brown table. She told me she was going to write the date and that she knew how to write it all by herself. She proceeded to write APRIL 2, 1986, then completed a one page letter to her father.

Without a longitudinal perspective, it would have appeared that the first interactions about the function of dating personal letters had no effect on Hana's learning. Similarly there would have appeared to be no connection between social interaction and her ability to date her letter conventionally in April. However, as this example illustrates, children often needed repeated opportunities to observe and talk with others about the aspects of literacy they found interesting before they began to experiment with these ideas in their own texts. Thus many of the social exchanges at the writing table which seemed brief and unimportant as single learning events, added important information to children's literacy knowledge which would only later be publicly displayed in conversation or written texts. Though we commonly think of learning as happening at one point in time, close observation of learners suggests that it occurs over time, instead. Though it is sometimes possible to point to the moment a particular hypothesis was first used in public, these events always have a history. And since in this classroom children's literacy learning was embedded in author/audience conversations and demonstrations, this history almost always included past social interactions.

Discussion:

The Role of Social Interaction in Children's Literacy Learning

The analyses of children's self-selected literacy activities reported in this paper have indicated that social interaction was an integral part of literacy events in this classroom and that it played an important role in children's literacy learning. Through conversation children negotiated access to space and materials, explored social relationships among participants, and shared personal experiences on a variety of topics. But most important for this study, conversation served as a means by which participants expressed the meanings they were forming as they authored their own texts, and as they read the texts produced by other authors.

Overall, my observations in this study have led me to conclude that author/audience exchanges are important literacy learning opportunities for both parties. For the *audience*, these interactions provide opportunities for observing demonstrations of the uses of literacy products and processes in contexts that

are familiar and understandable. In this classroom, these contexts are familiar because the participants have a long history of interaction with one another. Children and teachers have built shared understandings of this context and, thus, a shared meaning potential (Halliday, 1975) related to it; that is, they have a stock of knowledge built in past events which describes interactions at the literacy centers, potentially appropriate uses for literacy, and the personal characteristics of their colleagues as authors and audiences. When they play the audience role they are able to use this knowledge to make predictions about other authors' work.

However, audiences are not the only ones learning about literacy through conversation. Their comments and questions have an important effect on the literacy learning of *authors* as well. Hearing an audience's response allows authors to see what interpretations others attach to their texts. Sometimes these interpretations match their intended meanings very closely. But on other occasions the audience's interpretation comes as a surprise. Sometimes audience interpretations link authors' texts to meanings they have not considered relevant before. When this happens the audience plays an important role in helping authors expand the meanings of their texts. On other occasions audience interpretations serve as anomalies because they are at odds with the author's intentions. Conversation heightens the probability that authors will become aware of these differences and provides, at the same time, a means for exploring them.

Halliday (1975) suggests that a child is able to create meanings about interactive events because "there is a systematic relation between what he hears and what is going on around him" (p. 141). That is, the choices speakers make when they form an oral text are always related to what is going on (the field), the communication system chosen and the role it plays in the event (the mode), and the social relationships of the participants (the tenor). As children have numerous opportunities to experience oral texts related to a particular context of situation, they are able to build for themselves meanings about the events as well as language which expresses those meanings. They are able to associate a part of the meaning potential -- a register -- with that particular context of situation.

Based on the data presented in this paper, I would argue that in this classroom the relationship between *written language* and the context of situation is no less systematic. As children and adults read and write, they select meanings for their texts which reflect the context of situation as they have come to

understand it. As they exchange meanings about texts through conversation, both authors and audiences come to associate a particular portion of their meaning potential with the particular types of reading and writing events which occur at the writing table; that is, they form literacy registers. Because children build their registers for literacy events in conversation with other members of their authoring community, these registers are to a great extent shared by those participating in the subculture of the classroom. Thus, readers are using the knowledge they have formed through classroom interaction as a basis for understanding the *content* and *purposes* of their friends' and teachers' texts, as well as the *processes* used to create them.

However, interpretations are never totally shared because individuals are constructing meanings based on their personal views of reality which bear the unique stamp of their past experiences. Therefore, conversation is also a major source of surprises. As individuals express their unique perspectives on ongoing activities, differences in interpretation become apparent. Conversation is an important force in moving children's learning ahead because it presents them with anomalies. It provides opportunities for them to build common meanings as well as to explore the gaps between their meanings and those of others in their classroom.

Therefore, I have hypothesized that it is the two opposite outcomes of conversation -- the building of shared meanings and the presentation of challenges to participants' existing meanings -- which make literacy learning both possible and probable within the social context of the writing table. It is the recognition of differences between one's existing literacy knowledge and that of other authors which motivates a search for more adequate hypotheses. And it is the stock of shared meanings built in previous literacy events, together with a shared understanding of the social context of the event in progress, which provides a base from which children can construct literacy knowledge by linking the unknown to the known. Children generate, test, and refine this knowledge through conversation, observation of demonstrations, and experimentation in their own texts.

In addition to providing the supportive context and the motivation for literacy learning, social interaction appears to play a third role in children's literacy learning processes. The data from this study suggest that the character of the interactions between children, their peers, and teachers plays an important role in influencing the kinds of cognitive strategies children will eventually internalize and use

independently as they read and write. This hypothesis is supported by Vygotsky's(1978) theory that "all the higher psychological functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (p. 57), and that over time these functions are internalized and begin to occur independently. By proposing that learning in social situations is always in advance of independent activity, Vygotsky has at the same time suggested a mechanism for learning, and firmly rooted the meanings which are constructed in the social reality of the child's community.

In this study, the link between social interaction patterns and the development of cognitive strategies seems most clear in relation to to the way children learn to reflect on their own authoring processes from the audience's perspective. The data indicate that as children shifted *social* stances from constructing texts as as authors to responding to audience questions about their work, they were also encouraged to shift *cognitive* stances from using literacy to reflecting on it. As a result of participation in social situations where audience comments and questions required them to take the audience's perspective, children learned both the specific types of questions and comments made by particular audiences in different situations, and the value of thinking reflectively about their own writing. At least in some situations, children in this classroom were able to internalize an absent audience's perspective and to use it strategically plan and revise their texts. Thus, it appears that both awareness of the need to take the audience perspective and knowledge of particular audiences are built first through face-to-face interaction between authors and audiences, and later internalized to be used independently.

Overall, the results of this study have led me to hypothesize that informal social interaction at the writing table served at least three important functions in the literacy learning of children in the classroom where this study was conducted. First, it was through an exchange of meanings in conversation that children, their peers, and teachers built a shared understanding of the content, processes, and purposes of literacy in that setting. This shared meaning potential provided the predictable base from which children could explore new features and uses of print. Second, it was through social interaction that children met challenges to their interpretations of texts and their use of literacy processes. Because their purposes in writing and reading were to communicate and to understand the messages sent by others, encountering differences of perspective through interaction with others motivated children to construct new hypotheses about literacy. And third, it was through participation in social situations requiring

children to examine their texts from the perspective of their audience, that children learned to strategically shift stances from constructing texts to reflecting on them as a means of guiding their text production activities.

Therefore, this paper has shown that children's self-selected text-production activities are an important context for literacy learning. The richness of these activities comes from opportunities to initiate one's own projects, to integrate and apply their existing literacy knowledge in text worlds of their own creation, and to test the communicative success of these texts in situations which are familiar and meaningful. The results of this study emphasize the importance of opportunities for young authors to construct their own texts and to talk about those texts with others. Though young children's self-selected text production activities have received less attention than children's attempts to *co-author* meanings/texts with adults or more experienced peers during shared book reading (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Panofsky, 1986; Snow, 1983) or shared writing (Author, 1986), it appears that both contexts support and extend children's literacy learning.

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Table 1

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

	Data Collection Procedures			Data Analysis Procedures	
	Duration	Focus	Techniques	Focus	Techniques
Phase 1	1 month 4 days/week	Field Entry: Negotiating my role as researcher and teacher Becoming familiar with the setting	Participant/Observation Field notes after exit Collection of artifacts Informal interviews with teachers	Refine methodological procedures for recording field notes, cataloging artifacts Determine range of literacy events Recognize initial patterns in literacy behavior	Weekly reviews of MN & TN Indefinite triangulation Peer debriefing Weekly reviews of FN Weekly reviews of FN
Phase 2	3 months 3 days/week	Developing hypotheses	Participant/Observation Field notes in setting Collection of artifacts Audiotape Photographs Informal interviews with teachers and children Indefinite triangulation	Search for patterns in literacy behavior Develop working hypotheses Construct inventory of working hypotheses Estimate obtrusiveness of new data collection methods Catalogue audiotapes	Weekly reviews of FN Constant comparative Method Intensive review of all FN & TN at end of this Phase Indefinite triangulation Peer debriefing Review MN Record major events & cross reference data sources
Phase 3	2 months 3 days/week	Theoretical sampling to further develop and refine hypotheses.	Participant/Observation Field notes in setting Collection of products Audiotape Photographs Videotape Informal interviews with children and teachers Indefinite triangulation	Refine and develop hypotheses Catalogue VT data Guide theoretical sampling	Weekly reviews of FN Constant comparative method Indefinite triangulation Peer debriefing Record major events and cross-reference data sources Weekly review of FN and VT logs
Phase 4	2 months 2 half days/week	Field Exit: Refine hypotheses	Field notes in setting Indefinite triangulation	Refine and extend hypotheses Check credibility of report Revise report to reflect participants' comments	Review of VT data Transcription of VT data Microsociolinguistic analysis of VT data Constant comparative method applied to VT data Analysis of individuals' literacy learning Searching for negative cases Indefinite triangulation Peer debriefing Member check conferences

Note: MN = methodological notes; TN = theoretical notes, FN = field notes; VT = videotape.

Table 2

General Patterns of Participation During Self-Selected Literacy Activities

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Producing Individual Texts

1) Interacting with Other Authors: Participants are engaged in creating their own texts, but spend time talking with other authors. Though they maintain "individual" ownership of the finished product, they are often influenced by the comments and texts of others at the center. They also may ask others for assistance in some part of the production of their text.

2) Watching, Interacting with Authors: Participants come to the center and spend time watching and talking with others about the texts underway. They are not currently involved in creating a text themselves.

3) Individual or Parallel Authoring: Participants work either alone, or side by side with others to create their own text. If others are present, interaction is generally limited to brief responses to questions, or quick requests for materials.

4) Exchanging Literacy Products: Participants give products directly to others at the center, or start an interaction by telling the receiver that they "have mail" in their classroom mailbox.

Producing Shared Texts

5) Co-authoring a Single Graphic Text: Participants work together to produce a single product whose ownership will be shared. Co-authors work together to negotiate their roles in text production.

6) Negotiating Shared Meanings About Interaction: Participants are engaged in creating their own texts, but conversation focuses on developing mutual agreement about the meaning of the activities underway. Conversation frequently focuses on commonalities in the preferences and activities of the group members, and on social relationships.

Other Interactions

7) Visiting the Center on "Business": A child or adult stops to talk with a participant about something unrelated to the events at the center.

Table 3

Frequency of Speech Styles in Example 1

Speech Style	Adult Author	Child Audience	Child Author	Adult Audience	Child Author	Child Audience
Information Stmt.	16	3	7	5	15	8
Suggestive Stmt.	-	-	-	2	-	1
Evaluative Stmt.	1	-	-	1	-	-
Tag Question	3	-	-	1	-	-
Information Req.	-	-	-	5	1	2
Req. for Eval.	-	-	1	-	2	1
Summons	-	-	-	-	-	3
Req. for Joint Act.	2	-	-	-	-	-
Clarification Req.	-	-	-	5	-	-
Exclamation	1	1	-	-	-	-
	23	4	8	19	18	15

Table 4

Conversational Roles of Authors and Audiences

Authors	Audiences
Produce written text.	Read texts and observe literacy processes.
1. Spontaneously talk about texts and processes.	1. Ask questions about texts and processes of others.
2. Respond to audience questions.	2. Offer interpretations of authors' texts and processes.
3. Describe in-process authoring activities.	3. Make suggestions for authors' activities.
4. Request assistance from audience.	4. Provide assistence requested by authors.
5. Request evaluation from audience.	5. Evaluate authors' products, or activities.
6. Self-directed talk.	

Table 5

Learning Outcomes of Author/Audience Interaction

Observed Literacy Behavior	Learning Outcome
1. Linking texts to conversation and demonstrations of other authors.	Activation of existing literacy knowledge.
2. Asking questions to check current hypotheses about literacy and interpretations of texts.	Confirmation of existing literacy knowledge.
3. Exploring new aspects of literacy or noticing new aspects of familiar demonstrations.	Formation of new literacy knowledge.
4. Working to resolve challenges to current literacy knowledge presented by audiences.	Revision of existing literacy knowledge
5. Using shared knowledge about literacy in conversation and text production.	Formation of shared literacy registers by members of the authoring community.
6. Self-initiated revision of texts during explanation of texts or processes to audience.	Authors shift stances to become audiences for their own work.
7. Conscious planning of texts for an absent audience.	Internalization of audience's perspective.
8. Completing texts with suggestions or assistance from others.	Experiencing literacy activities beyond author's independent abilities.
9. Delayed use of conversation and demonstrations in text production.	(Any of the above outcomes.)

Appendix A

Transcription Conventions

Direct transcription: When speech is transcribed verbatim from videotape (VT), audiotape (AT), or field notes (FN), it is enclosed in quotation marks. (e.g., "It's a dot rainbow!")

Emphasis: Where a word or syllable is spoken with extra emphasis, it is underlined. (e.g., "Staple regrabber!")

Simultaneous speech: Where two people speak at once, the overlapping portion of their utterances are enclosed with slash marks. (e.g., /"Right!"/ says Jared. "/Right/" agrees Tokkumma.)

Incompleteness: Where an utterance is interrupted or otherwise left incomplete, this is indicated by "--". (e.g., "It's -- That's musical notes.")

Pausing: When there are noticeable pauses either within or between utterances, this is indicated by a series of dots (e.g., . . .).

Inaudible Speech: Where words or phrases are completely inaudible, this is indicated by a series of asterisks enclosed in parentheses (e.g., (* * *)). The number of asterisks is an estimate of the number of words which were spoken.

Tentative Transcription: When the exact transcription of speech is difficult, this is indicated by enclosing a probable transcription in parentheses. (e.g., "We make somebody (doubledoo).")

Ommitted Conversation: When transcripts have been shortened, this is indicated by a series of carets (e.g., ^ ^ ^).

Explanatory Comments: When explanatory comments are added to a direct transcription, they are enclosed in brackets, (e.g., "Look it's long" [the tail]), or marked by use of narrative conventions. (e.g., "Oh, you want to draw a monkey?" I guess.)

Reference Numbers: Statements and questions are numbered consecutively within events. (e.g., (22) "I can't do it."). Speech acts referenced in the body of the paper are identified by the number of the example and the statement. (e.g., utterance 4:(1) refers to Example 4, utterance 1)

Appendix B

Speech Styles Used in Literacy Events

1. **Informative Statement:** Declarative sentences whose main function is to provide information relevant to the acknowledged topic to another participant, to comment on ongoing interaction, or to express personal feelings toward specific features of the interactive scene. (Corsaro, 1979a)
2. **Imperative:** Direct commands or warnings which function to control the behavior of another participant. They are usually delivered with heavy stress at the end of the utterance and in an emphatic tone of voice. (Corsaro, 1979a)
3. **Question with Answer:** An interrogative which also contains a possible answer (e.g. "What is that, a heart?") (Corsaro, 1979a)
4. **Tag Question:** Declaratives transformed into an interrogative by the addition of a tag marker at the end of the utterance. (Corsaro, 1979a)
5. **Leading Question:** An interrogative used when the asker has a good idea how the other participant will respond, and which functions to get the respondent to elaborate on rather than confirm the previous utterance. (Corsaro,1979a)
6. **Directive Question:** A directive statement turned into interrogative form which functions to control behavior. (Corsaro, 1979a)
7. **Summons:** A move used to gain the attention of other participants. (e.g. You know what?, "Look") (Corsaro, 1979a)
8. **Clarification Request:** Interrogative which calls for the clarification, confirmation, or repetition of the preceding utterances, but which does not contribute information in line with the established topic (Corsaro,1977).
9. **Information Request:** Interrogative in which the asker seeks information of which he/she has no specific knowledge. (Corsaro, 1979a)
10. **Requests for Behavior of Others:** Interrogative in which asker requests respondent to perform certain activities. (Corsaro, 1985)
11. **Requests for Joint Action:** Speaker suggests some type of joint activity. These are frequently declaratives without heavy stress, and take the form "Let's ***) (Corsaro, 1985)
12. **Answers:** Declaratives produced in response to a previous question or imperative from another interactant, or to account for past action or failure to act. (Corsaro,1985)
13. **Suggestive Statement:** A declarative used to suggest/propose an activity for another participant which may or may not be carried out at their discretion. These statements sometimes contain markers such as "probably", "might".
14. **Evaluation:** A declarative in which the sender approves or disapproves of other interactants, and their activities.
15. **Request for Evaluation:** An interrogative which calls on another participant to approve or disapprove of someone or their activities.
16. **Exclamation:** A brief utterance which expresses emotion, but does not add substantive information to the conversation. (e.g., "Wow!", "Oh!")